

CLIMATE CHANGE AND PUBLIC HEALTH ADAPTATION PROGRAM: CANADIAN PERSPECTIVE

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Background :The impacts of climate change can place significant demand on health, particularly among vulnerable populations and regions. The need for adaptation strategies to prepare for, and address, the risks and impacts of a changing climate has been widely recognized. Public health professionals play an essential role in knowledge translation and transfer of science-based information and development of integrated education, surveillance and response systems to reduce health risks. This project will address gaps and identify public health adaptation strategies to address the impacts of climate change on vector-borne and water-borne infectious diseases in Canada.

Methods:The climate change and adaptation program consists of two components: university research and community/regional based pilot projects. The university research projects are developing tools to assess community vulnerability to water-borne and/or vector-borne diseases. The community/regional based pilot projects have undertaken activities to examine infectious disease risks and adaptation associated with climate change in their regions. .

Results:Tools for public health (i.e. risk maps, forecasting models), resulting from the university research, are being produced to identify the predicted risk of water-borne and vector-borne (specifically Lyme disease and West Nile virus) diseases now and in the future with from a changing climate. From the pilot projects a synthesis report of the findings, lessons learned and "best practices" was created to provide information on how health regions and departments in Canada can prepare for and adapt to infectious disease threats from a changing climate based on the experience and activities of the pilot regions.

Conclusions:Through tool development by academic research and knowledge translation and transfer, public health capacity to anticipate and respond to emerging vector-borne and/or water-borne infectious diseases will be increased through the development of appropriate adaptation strategies.